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SUBJECT: FOLLOW UP TO THE CAIRO SPEECH

REF: STATE 71325

¶1. (U) In response to reftel, Consulate General Jerusalem conducted specific consultations with targeted stakeholders regarding the topics in reftel. Our primary line of questioning was: from stakeholders' perspectives, what programs in the USG portfolio should be expanded, what programs are missing, what programs should be incorporated into USG-funded activities, and what ideas should we consider, either in their sector or within the larger Palestinian socio-economic environment?

¶2. (U) Individual consultations were mainly done via email, phone, or in face-to-face meetings. The 51 consulted stakeholders can be categorized as follows: civil society organization directors (14); government ministers and employees (13); business organization leaders (11); academics (6); NGO leaders (5); and press (2). In addition, outreach to stakeholders in the education and youth sector incorporated an innovative online survey through the Palestinian Youth Portal. Also, survey questions were texted to more than 5,000 members of the National Youth Corps.

¶3. (U) Overall, reactions to the President's speech have been quite positive. Palestinian stakeholders in general cited the "historic importance" of the speech and identified it as a "sea change" in US foreign policy. Many individuals welcomed the President's outreach to the Muslim world and appreciated his understanding of their culture and heritage. Palestinian stakeholders noted not only the President's cultural understanding of Muslims, but of Palestinians in particular.

¶4. (U) Alongside the enthusiasm about the event and its message, stakeholders also expressed concern about follow-through with the list of political initiatives and assistance programs the President cited. A few individuals specifically expressed concern that, without concrete actions soon, the speech would be regarded as mere empty promises from a world leader to help the Palestinian cause.

¶5. (U) Stakeholders' concerns focused on the situation in Gaza and what they considered the lack of a strong and active USG presence there. In addition, the need to further focus on marginalized sectors of the population, including women, youth, the disabled, and internally-displaced people (e.g. migrant youth workers), was a key element of many consultations.

¶6. (U) Specific recommendations from stakeholders have been divided according to the sub-categories of the following three areas of engagement listed in reftel: human development (paras 7-27), entrepreneurship and interfaith partnership (paras 28-31), and science and technology (paras 32-35).

Education

¶7. (U) Exchanges to the United States: Opportunities for

Palestinian students to study in the United States are currently quite limited; stakeholders recommended that the USG cast a wider net. More exchanges should be offered, they said, particularly at the BA level, for which there are fewer USG-funded scholarships (the current Near East and South Asia undergraduate program is small in scale and does not give students a choice of which institution they can attend). The YES High School and Fulbright Student programs should also be scaled up for Palestine. Short-term exchange programs, such as the six-week English Language Undergrad Program and the MEPI student leaders' summer institute, are also very popular and should be scaled up. Targeted exchange programs, particularly the MEPI Legal and Business Fellows' Program and the Leaders for Democracy Fellows' Program, have proven very successful among Palestinians.

¶18. (U) Exchanges to the Palestine Territories: Stakeholders lamented a lack of US students in the Palestine Territories. For instance, there are currently only two US Fulbright scholars per year in the West Bank. Given recent improvements in the security environment, stakeholders suggested, there should be a commensurate increase in the number of USG-funded opportunities for US students aged 18 and over to study in the West Bank, both on short- and long-term programs.

¶19. (U) Opportunity Grants: The Abraham Lincoln Opportunity Grants program -- which provides funding to help kids apply to US colleges -- has just been launched, and there will be an initial cohort of 15 students in the West Bank and Gaza. This initiative should be expanded to help more young Palestinians to apply to the United States.

¶10. (U) Local BA scholarships: Due to social or economic pressures, some young Palestinians -- mainly women -- are unable to

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pursue their educations abroad. Post and MEPI have therefore initiated the A-Plus scholarship program to fund a bachelor's education at Palestinian universities for 12-15 youngsters per cohort. The program will begin with AY 2010-2011, but thus far has funding for only four cohorts of students.

¶11. (U) Local MA scholarships: ConGen Jerusalem has worked with several Palestinian universities on developing specialized 2-year MA in American Studies programs. The USG could provide scholarship support to outstanding students to attend these programs, at a cost of just \$5000 per student.

¶12. (U) English Access Microscholarship Program: Many stakeholders pointed out the need for more extensive English language instruction, such as that provided to underprivileged Palestinians through the Access program.

¶13. (U) Palestinian Faculty Development program (PFDP): This program helps to increase capacity within the Palestinian higher education sector. PFDP has thus far provided 34 PhD scholarships for Palestinian faculty and 13 short-term scholarships. USAID's program partner, the Open Society Institute, covers half the cost, while universities agree to offer lowered tuitions.

YOUTH

¶14. (U) Palestinian Youth Portal (PYP): PYP is an online gateway and network in Arabic and English connecting Palestinian youth to each other and potentially with other youth in the Middle East and the rest of the world. PYP provides access to digital libraries, online communities, training materials, and a wealth of other digital resources. PYP also offers personal pages where young people can create blogs, communicate with other members, and exchange and access info on employment opportunities and livelihood skills. The PYP should be expanded to create more economic opportunities for Palestinian youth and to prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship and good governance.

¶15. (U) National Youth Corps: The service learning-based National Youth Corps should be expanded to help more Palestinian youth

acquire leadership and other skills that enhance their employability and civic engagement.

¶16. (U) Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRCs): Recent coordination with Cisco, Intel, and Microsoft has produced significant positive results in the YDRCs. Programming through the YDRCs should be greatly expanded to cover more subject areas and reach more youth. One suggestion is to have English Reading Corners at the YDRCs, where students can access English Language books.

¶17. (U) Camp Discovery: This is a 13-day English language, artistic expression, scientific discovery, and leadership/team-building summer camp for 450 at-risk Palestinian youth aged 8-14 residing in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. It has been tremendously successful in its first three years, and stakeholders have asked for it to be expanded. With funding, the number of campers could be increased to 750 youth.

¶18. (U) Business Internship programs: Stakeholders called for more internship opportunities for young Palestinians in the region or in the United States. Post already has a successful young women's internship program, which this year has paired 50 recent female West Bank university graduates with major Palestinian companies/businesses (banks, insurance companies, information technology firms, etc.) for a period of three months. This number has expanded from 17 interns during the pilot year in 2008 and, with sufficient funding, could be further expanded to more than 100 interns per year. Over fifty per cent of women who complete this program find employment immediately afterwards. It would also be beneficial to expand this program to young men, as well as to support more internships in the NEA region or in the United States (such as through the Young Professionals Program).

¶19. (U) Other internships: Stakeholders recommended that we expand the internship concept to include other sectors, such as politics and the law. For instance, we might pair young women political science students with well-known female Palestinian politicians, and do the same with young law students.

DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW

¶20. (U) Elections: According to stakeholders, USG support for civil society oversight of the anticipated January 2010 Palestinian presidential and legislative elections is not sufficient. Most of the effort to date has been centered on Ramallah and Jerusalem, they

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said, but more work needs to be done with communities and civil society leaders in more remote cities, such as Hebron and Nablus.

¶21. (U) Civil society organizations: Stakeholders called for the USG to expand its focus on developing civil society institutions to oversee the performance of the PA government and highlight issues of corruption, transparency, and accountability.

¶22. (U) Plurality: Future programming should continue to encourage the emergence of multiple political parties, stakeholders suggested.

¶23. (U) Women in Politics: Several stakeholders noted the need for more USG support to train Palestinian women for participation in grassroots organizing, civil society, and the political process, in order to make changes in laws towards women (e.g., honor killings and inheritance statutes) and to achieve greater representation in public office. MEPI would be the ideal vehicle for this.

PUBLIC HEALTH

¶24. (U) Future programming for public health should include psychological and mental health assistance for Palestinians and for children in particular. In one example, Post has designed a program to bring seven humanitarian aid workers from Gaza to the United States for three weeks in October 2009 on an IVLP to learn about dealing with humanitarian crises and treating post-traumatic stress

disorder. Stakeholders also urged a continued focus on women's health issues, such as the Breast Cancer Awareness project.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

¶25. (U) Unemployment: Private sector leaders emphasized the importance of addressing unemployment among less educated Palestinians. They singled out three sectors for additional funding and focus in the coming months: agriculture, agri-processing, and tourism.

¶26. (U) Housing: The shortage of affordable housing was noted, both as a socio-economic problem that could be addressed through USG programming, and as a potential solution for employing unskilled youth. In addition, the cost of housing loans is around seven percent; the USG should support programs that make these loans more affordable.

¶27. (U) Exports: Stakeholders suggested that USG funding seek ways to increase processing and packaging of Palestinian products in the West Bank and Gaza for export markets.

Entrepreneurship

¶28. (U) Encourage entrepreneurs, especially young women: Stakeholders urged us to help Palestinians in their twenties and thirties to set up small enterprises. Ideas include bringing Corporate Ambassadors to visit these businesses on the ground, or sending the young entrepreneurs on "study" tours of similar businesses in the region or the United States. In addition, we could provide additional support to the newly-founded Business Development Center (BDC, part of the local Business Women's Forum) through funding of training for young women in business practices. The USG could then offer free feasibility studies of business concepts and seed money for starting small businesses with close follow-on monitoring and evaluation.

Interfaith Partnerships

¶29. (U) Palestinian-Israeli Interfaith: Many stakeholders felt that interfaith programs between Arabs and Israelis, typically held in Jerusalem, were generally ineffectual -- "all talk, no action." Meetings in third, "neutral" countries were seen as more effective, as interlocutors felt more at ease to discuss sensitive topics.

¶30. (U) Palestinian-US interfaith: These exchanges were viewed much more positively by stakeholders. They included sending a Palestinian group to the United States (as Post did this year with a group of six religious scholars), and encouraging American students and scholars to come here for a conference to be held in conjunction with the Islamic Studies department at a local university (Al-Quds University has expressed interest in doing this).

¶31. (U) More "Track Two": Several civil society leaders felt that people-to-people interactions between Israelis and Palestinians should continue, regardless of progress in the peace process. They

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called for more support for Palestinian-Israeli programs so that civil society groups from both sides of the conflict can meet to discuss thorny issues. Several asserted that the most successful programs are those that do not skirt the issues, but rather tackle them head-on. They stressed that this was "dialogue, not normalization". Again, this would preferably take place in a third country, not in Jerusalem, they said.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

¶32. (U) Environmental Programming: Stakeholders noted successful USG programs with local universities on environmental issues. They asked for more environmental speaker programs and DVCs. Al-Quds University professors would like to partner with Post to organize an

Environmental "Road Show" to Palestinian universities and youth centers, in which innovative environmental projects would be presented and topics -- including renewable energy, water management, and alternative energy -- can be discussed.

¶33. (U) Science summer camp: Stakeholders urged us to expand on the pioneering science summer camp for disadvantaged youth sponsored by Post since 2007 in partnership with Al-Quds University. This year, 110 youngsters attended the camp. Post could easily increase the number of attendees to 300 per year.

¶34. (U) Water issues: Stakeholders said that the USG should expand its support for water and wastewater treatment programs in Palestine. They suggested a conference on water and wastewater treatment to be held jointly with a local university environmental department.

¶35. (U) IVLPs: Stakeholders favored more IVLP programs on scientific and technical issues. Of 70 IVLP programs announced for the NEA region this year, only 11 were on scientific and technical issues, and those were primarily on the environment.

¶36. (U) Post and stakeholders are ready to prepare specific proposals to implement any of the new initiatives outlined above or to expand the scale of successful current programs.

WALLES